

HOUSTON, TEX.

CHRONICLE

E - 279,608

S - 333,807

## Viet Reds put U.S. on spot

The American response to the new Viet Cong peace proposal so far has been correct, it seems to us. Ambassador David K. E. Bruce has told the Communists that much of the seven-point proposal is obviously unacceptable. But he has expressed the U.S. willingness to privately explore the plan more fully to clarify obscure issues.

The Central Intelligence Agency's analysis of the proposal is right on the mark. The CIA sees it as an attempt by the enemy to embarrass the United States at home and abroad and to undermine the reelection campaign of South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The new proposal does soften the Communist position on the release of American prisoners of war, and this no doubt was directed at the peace movement in the United States. Indeed, the Communists were proposing essentially what a majority of the U.S. Senate has recommended to the President—the removal of American troops from Vietnam by the end of the year in return for the release of U.S. POWs.

As the CIA paper points out:

"The Communists doubtless hope their initiative on the prisoners—coupled as it is with a restatement of their basic position on United States withdrawals—will make things awkward for the United States government both at home and overseas.

"They may also believe that their political proposals will appeal to many in the United States who are looking for a face-saving way out of the war. They probably are also hoping the new proposal will fuel worries in Saigon about Washington's longer-term support," the CIA said.

"The new formula for a political settlement in South Vietnam, by its fuzziness and air of reasonableness, is designed both to encourage individuals in South Vietnam whose support of the war is wavering and to give some ammunition to those who are already working to build an anti-Thieu, anti-war constituency."

All this is true, yet it should not dissuade the United States from sincerely trying to work out a negotiated settlement which not only would permit the United States to quit Vietnam but which also would reestablish peace in that part of the world.

The United States is well on the way to withdrawing the bulk of its troop force. Troops are being brought home at the rate of 14,300 a month and it is anticipated there will be about 175,000 there by Dec. 1, compared to 543,400 in the spring of 1969.

But Vietnamization is not designed to end the fighting. It merely shifts the burden of fighting from the United States to South Vietnam. Of course, once our troops are out, the main responsibility for settling the war will rest with the divided Vietnamese, not with us.